

FULLER

SOPHIA AUGUSTA HUTSON, A BLIND

DEAF-MUTE

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the formation of ideas, would be able with profit to study these phenomena in the peculiar conditions in which they are produced among deaf-mutes.

Those who make it their mission to form the mind and character of the young, may, like the clergy, be styled the physicians of the soul. Is there not, then, for those who are studying the profession of teaching a sort of *clinique*, capable of being utilized to advantage; and would not they be following this *clinique* in observing pupils of such exceptional condition—veritable patients from a psychological point of view, deeply suffering from the disease of ignorance—and whom it is possible to restore to what we may truly call health of mind and soul, though still unable to overcome their physical infirmity? The schools for the deaf and dumb, therefore, in being allowed a place among those which ought logically to come under the control and supervision of the Minister of Public Instruction, would be able to make a fair and just recompense for the privilege thus accorded them.

SOPHIA AUGUSTA HUTSON, A BLIND DEAF-MUTE.

BY MISS ANGIE A. FULLER, SAVANNA, ILL.

[THE following sketch derives additional interest from the fact that its writer is herself totally deaf and partly blind; at times almost entirely blind. In answer to an inquiry from the editor, she writes as follows: "Congestive chills left me totally deaf at the age of thirteen. Two years later my eyes became sore, and they have never since ceased to trouble me. I have never been too blind to distinguish between light and darkness, but have often been unable to recognize members of the family close by my side. I have entirely lost the sight of my left eye, and the right eye has been so much affected that all print or writing was a blank. At present I am able to read and write with some comfort, and I hope I may escape the total darkness that has so long threatened to settle permanently upon me." Miss Fuller was educated at the Illinois Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. —ED. ANNALS.]

Sophia Augusta Hutson was born at Wilkesbarre, Pa., August 1, 1856. She differs from Laura Bridgman, Julia Brace, and several other well-known cases, in one important respect: their threefold misfortune was the result of sickness, while hers dates from birth. Her parents, however, did not know certainly that she was deaf until she was about five years old, attributing her silence and odd ways to her blindness until she reached that

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age. Without doubt, her dumbness, like that of the majority of deaf-mutes, is only the natural consequence of deafness, and not due to any defect in the vocal organs.

No effort was made to give her any instruction in language until she was sixteen years old. Then the Rev. J. B. Howell, while acting as city missionary in the employ of the Presbyterian Church of Wilkesbarre, found her, and pitying her dark, isolated condition obtained her parents' consent to give her lessons one hour every week.

At first Mr. Howell used a glove upon which the English alphabet was printed; but as she did not like it, and finally refused to wear it, he tried the knuckle (or Indian) alphabet, in connection with raised letters. By this means she learned a good many words, mostly common nouns; and he might have kept on teaching her until she had gained a fair command of language, had he not been sent as a missionary to Brazil.

While preparing for his mission field, he learned that I was willing to carry on the work which he had begun, and he took pains to get me installed as her teacher. Accordingly I was introduced into Mr. Hutson's family on the 8th of November, 1873.

I remember Sophia as a girl of medium height and slender frame, with very delicate hands, very pale face, high forehead, and hair remarkable for being a mixture of pure white, jet black, and gray. It was arranged in neat braids at the back of her head. Her eyes were very small, the iris being scarcely larger than an ordinary-sized bean, and she generally kept them tightly closed. Her expression was rather vacant, but did not indicate weakness of intellect.

Two ladies, one of whom was a deaf-mute, accompanied me on my first visit to Sophia. She quickly recognized them, and as quickly perceived that I was a stranger. We held our hands over her while we spelled, that she might understand we talked with our fingers instead of our voices. On the fore-finger of her left hand she wore a ring, and, noticing that she seemed to prize it highly, the first word I spelled to her that day was "ring," care being taken to show her the connection between the word spelled and the circle on her finger. She seemed much pleased with her first lesson, and laughed heartily, as was her custom when pleased.

Although she had no previous knowledge of signs as used by

the deaf and dumb, she readily understood the signs I made for cup, water, thread, knife, book, and brought me the articles without hesitation. I began to teach her by means of the one-hand manual alphabet, and by such signs as could be easily communicated to her. "Mother" was the word I used for the second lesson, taking care that she should understand clearly the connection between the word and the woman, to whom she clung so closely, and whom she kissed so often. She quickly learned to spell it, and to make the sign for "father," which was the word next tried, and as quickly learned, and thenceforward spelled many times a day. That she fully comprehended the relation between these two words and the persons they designated, the fact that she would make the sign for the word the instant her mother or father entered the room where she sat ought to be conclusive proof.

Upon my first introduction into the family, her father said to me, "I love Sophia more than all the rest of my children, because of her great affliction," and during the entire period of my sojourn with them his conduct towards her uniformly corroborated his words; while her manner towards him showed plainly that she fully reciprocated his affection. After fifteen days' instruction she surprised me by spelling, without request or prompting, the following words in the order they are given: finger, father, tin cup, teacup, window, head, heart, stone, nose, ear, water, mother, apron, hat, collar, man, apple, table, thumb, baby. The last word, "baby," became a great favorite with her, and few things afforded her more pleasure than being allowed to hold a child. With all a mother's tenderness, she would hush a young babe or little child to sleep, seeming to know the instant they awoke or cried. Whenever her little nieces or nephews visited at her home she would have them sleep with her, claiming the privilege of undressing them at night and dressing them again in the morning; always doing the latter with precision, or, if she made a mistake, quickly discovering and rectifying it.

After I had been with Sophia a few weeks her sister's baby died, and as Mrs. Hutson was in feeble health and liable to die suddenly of heart disease, I thought the shock would be less severe to Sophia if she could have some idea beforehand of what death is. So, watching my opportunity, I led her to the dead baby, and, placing her hands upon its face and limbs, showed

her how cold and motionless it was; then spelled "baby is dead." When the coffin was brought in and the lid removed, I led her to it, and let her examine it carefully; then I made her notice how a lady took the body up and placed it in the coffin. When the lady held the baby near her face she kissed it tenderly, and wanted to take it in her arms. Had she been allowed, I verily believe she would have tried to warm it to life again. When the coffin lid was fastened, I again had her notice it, telling her when it was borne away that the men would put it into a grave, but that the baby's soul had gone to live with God in heaven. Had it been summer time I would have given her some idea of what a grave is by taking her into the garden, digging a hole in the ground, and burying a doll; but as it was mid-winter I could not carry my object-lesson so far. About a year afterwards I learned that her father was dead. That she missed him greatly I can but think. One of his ways of comforting her when she cried was to take her to a store and buy her candy, of which she was very fond. Early in the spring some one gave her a lump of maple sugar, which she insisted on sharing with me. I taught her to spell the name, and although during the summer we had no more to remind her of it, she would sometimes spell the name. "Apple" was another word she very often spelled, and when the family supply was exhausted, and kind friends brought me some, she invariably knew it, and received part of them as a reward for her sharpness. When summer came she took good care that I shared in the various fruits their garden produced.

Sophia had learned to knit and sew before I knew her, and when I tried to teach her to do crotchet-work she seemed delighted; she learned the two principal stitches in a short time, and during the next six months she made several lamp-mats and tidies. Indeed, she enjoyed crotcheting so much that she would often stop her lessons and spell "lamp-mat," meaning thereby to ask me to get her crotchet work.

About the house she was very useful; she could pare fruit and vegetables nicely, set and clear the table, wash, wipe, and put away dishes with scrupulous exactness; she also made her own bed, and folded clothes after the weekly washing and ironing was done, generally assigning each article to its proper place or owner without mistake. She could run up and down stairs with astonishing rapidity, and was frequently sent down

cellar upon errands when other members of the family did not care to take the trouble of lighting a lamp, the darkness and light being alike to her; or, at her father's bidding, she would go up stairs and get his hat, determining by touching his clothes whether he wanted his best or common hat.

At table she would run her teacup along the edge of her saucer after pouring tea or coffee, and in various other ways was careful not to soil the table-cloth or her clothing. She generally seemed to judge by smell what was on the table. She was exceedingly fond of fruit, yet was never greedy, and she seemed to enjoy her dainties most when she shared them with others.

During the summer I spent in Mr. Hutson's family severe drought in that region reduced the supply of water in the streams and wells to a very inconvenient degree. They were supplied with drinking water from a well a few rods from my window. Sophia frequently came to my window, out of lesson hours, and, reaching over the flower-bed which ran along that side of the house, leaned against the sill and asked for my tumbler in her peculiar way. When I gave it to her she would turn to the well, carefully lower the bucket, and having satisfied herself that it was partly or entirely full, as carefully draw it up, fill the glass and return it to me, her face beaming with intensest satisfaction. Although the water was miserably roily, it tasted delicious coming from her hands; and the memory of her thoughtful kindness will refresh my spirit in many a future hour when pain or trouble make me faint or weary.

Her nerves seemed to be very sensitive to the vibrations of sound; musical sounds especially afforded her much pleasure. Often she would push her sister towards the piano, and would herself kneel or sit beside the instrument in an attitude of close attention, sometimes expressing her pleasure by merry laughter.

She took much interest in the making of new garments, especially if they were her own, feeling of every part with most critical care. A new dress, apron, collar, or ribbons afforded her as much pleasure as such things do the majority of young ladies. I often found her standing before a looking-glass arranging her hair, collar, or ribbon, or trying on her mother's bonnet, apparently with as much satisfaction as if she could see the reflection. Another thing she frequently did was to go

to the clock and try to find out the time. This she was as likely to do when the room was totally dark as when it was light.

She distinguished currency from other paper, and when an old friend of her father's gave her a two-dollar bill she expressed her appreciation by spelling "New dress." When asked if she would not buy candy with it, she spelled decidedly "No."

She was very fond of flowers and leaves, and seemed highly gratified one winter day when I directed her attention to a monthly rose. After letting her touch its delicate petals, inhale its fragrance, and notice the peculiarities of the bush which bore it, I taught her to spell "rose" and "leaf." Often, after that lesson, she would point towards the house plants and spell these words. When summer came she greatly delighted to be led about the garden, to be allowed to pass her hands over the various shrubs and flowers, to enjoy the fragrance of the blossoms and learn their names.

She was easily frightened and much annoyed by insects. One day during a lesson the flies troubled us. Sophia expressed a wish to leave the room, and, promising to return shortly, she went out. In a few moments she returned, holding in her hand two small twigs broken from a white lilac bush, which grew close against the long portico that fronted the house. Smiling merrily, as though she felt she had triumphed over a foe, she handed me one of the twigs, and, sitting down, began vigorously brushing away the tormentors with the other. As it was then quite early in the summer, and we had not previously used even a fan or newspaper for a like purpose, I was as much surprised as delighted at this proof of inventive and defensive ability.

I was with her not quite ten months, during which time she learned to spell the names of many objects in and about the house and grounds; my plan always being, by simple object-lessons, to give her the names of things with which she came in daily contact, rather than to teach her a few sentences which she would seldom need to use, believing that, as her stock of names increased, she would perhaps form sentences herself.

After I had been with her three months I began teaching her to make figures. She soon convinced me that she possessed both taste and talent for numbers, and in a short time learned to write the digits. The multiplication table she learned in a

short time. She would pass her finger down any column I designated, usually being about ten minutes doing so; then would spell each number correctly.

During the last seven months I was with her I tried to teach her to write, and she made every effort to learn, but the time proved too short; though she learned to write her name, "Sophia," and the word "eat" tolerably well. I believe, despite the little progress we made, that, with patient instruction, she would in time have learned to write very legible script. She recognized certain words by laying her hand over mine while I was writing, proving that she knew them by spelling them correctly afterward. The name of her first teacher, Mr. J. B. Howell, was one she invariably recognized in this way, although I never gave her any intimation that I intended writing it. She also frequently made his initials with her fingers, as he had taught her to do; then, placing her hands over mine, would wait for me to write his name in full; and always, whether I wrote or spelled it, her face was all aglow with smiles and blushes. She cherished a very grateful regard for him, and during the first two or three months of my time with her, on Wednesday afternoons—the time when he had been accustomed to give her lessons—after dressing herself neatly, she would sit down by the window, and, pressing her face against the glass, watch for his coming. Her eager, expectant attitude, and her looks of keen disappointment because he did not come, were extremely touching.

Another word she delighted to spell, and always recognized when I wrote it, was "sun." When I first spelled the word to her we were standing before a window into which the spring sunbeams were shining brightly; I spelled the word slowly, and made her understand that the object, which produced the warmth and brightness which she felt, was above us and far off; she spelled the word after me, then pulling one eye open with her fingers, she leaned against the glass, straining, with all her might, to see the wonderful source of light and heat; not succeeding, she tried with the other eye in the same way; then, finding all effort useless, she reached up her hand, caught a little of the delicious warmth, and again spelled "sun."

In my own seasons of blindness, and relief therefrom, I had quoted King Solomon's assertion, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun." But while I stood

beside that fair girl as she struggled in vain to look upon them, the words assumed a depth, a force of meaning, entirely inexpressible.

A day or two before Christmas, Miss C., who always took a lively interest in Sophia's progress, called to see us, accompanied by her sister, who had just returned from Europe. They brought a copy of the Lord's Prayer in raised letters. I looked upon it with intensest satisfaction, and remarked to Sophia's father, "It is one of the most precious things that could be given her." To my astonishment, not to say regret, he replied, "No; she cannot understand about God." But firmly believing that the Holy Spirit would help her to understand it, I had her study the sweet prayer which in few words comprehends all the needs of humanity, and when I left her she could spell it correctly.

One day, wishing to give her a clearer idea of prayer, I led her to my room, and, kneeling beside the bed, had her do the same; I then placed my hands so that she could touch them, and by signs repeated the prayer she was learning. With an eagerness and look not easily described she followed my every motion, seeming to comprehend and share in the solemnity I felt. She seemed instinctively to know the Bible was superior to all other books, and would often turn from her lessons and spell "book," meaning for me to take my pocket Bible or large Testament and tell her a story, or spell an easy verse for her to memorize. If I took up any other book she would immediately be dissatisfied, and spell "book" again and again, until I took up the sacred volume; she would then smile contentedly, and eagerly attend to whatever story or passage I chose to communicate.

About midsummer a primer in raised letters was procured for her, and she had regular lessons in reading and spelling; no word seemed too long for her to spell after she had read it over once or twice. The first time she noticed the word God in her reading lesson, she smiled, and, bending her head towards the page, she tried to look at it; with the word Jesus it was the same.

For the droll she seemed to have a lively appreciation. One day her lesson was a piece in verse on "Early Rising." It began with the assertion—

"He who would thrive, must rise at five,"

and went on arguing through the numbers, reaching as a climax,

“He who would thrive quite, must sit up all night.”

The look of amusement which came into her face, and increased as she read along, showed that she both understood and appreciated the advice.

She often amused herself by trying to read from any book or newspaper which chanced to be at hand, passing her finger over the page as if she were following the line, and moving her head from side to side as many people do while reading. Of course, she did not always get her book or paper right-end up, but that made no difference; the bottom affording her as much information as the top.

She soon discovered that she was larger and stronger than I, and often during the last months of my stay with her she would catch me, draw me down into her lap, and hold me tightly with her left hand, while with her right she spelled the prayer, or some verse which happened to come into her mind. One of the Scripture passages I taught her—the one, indeed, which she seemed to like best—was the sweet assurance of our Saviour, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” She learned to spell this verse in a short time, and repeated it often with such evident satisfaction that I could but believe the precious peace it promises was in her heart. On the last day of my labor as her teacher I said to her, “My heart aches and is troubled, because I must leave you.” I could not doubt that she understood me, for she instantly laid her left hand over my heart and held it there for several minutes, while with her right hand she spelled again, “Let not your heart be troubled.”

Two weeks later, when ready to return to my Western home. I went to pay her a farewell visit. She seemed pleased to have me with her again, and with evident pride showed me two small tidies she had completed in the interval of my absence. At the table, instead of simply holding forward her plate or cup, as she had been accustomed to do, she spelled the name of whatever she wanted; and, as if to compensate me for the journey of a thousand miles I, while feeble and half blind, had made all alone for her sake, and also for the solicitude I should always feel for her, she drew me into her lap in her affectionate way, and spelled several times in succession, “I love you.”

After I had been with Sophia a few months I thought that Laura Bridgman would be interested to hear of one afflicted like herself; accordingly I wrote to her of my pupil and my efforts to teach her, mentioning my own condition merely as a proof that I could truly sympathize with her and Sophia in their greater deprivations. In reply, she wrote the following note:

"BOSTON, *March 24, 1874.*

"DEAR MISS FULLER: I am happy to write a reply to your letter, which came duly to me a few weeks ago. I have much compassion in the case of you, that you are deprived of seeing and hearing. God deals very graciously with those that are afflicted. I should like to see you, and also Sophia, and to become acquainted with you. I pray God for His people daily; He careth for them; Jesus is an unfailing friend for us; He is my light. I enjoy myself so highly. I hope that Sophia will make good progress in learning many years. She will be truly happy. You will be a teacher for her a long time if God permits. I devote a great deal of time to reading "*Old Curiosity Shop*" this term: I am almost through. I knew C. Dickens years ago. I shall be glad to hear of you again. Yours truly,

"L. D. BRIDGMAN."

The claims of the deaf and the blind to education at public expense is now conceded by all well-informed humane people, and those who give the subject due consideration agree that it is a tedious task to educate them: but few, even of the most humane and observant, realize the *double claim* to education which a child who is both deaf and blind holds against society; or, if they grant the claim, they are apt to expect too much improvement in a short time, forgetting the increased difficulty which the teacher of a child thus afflicted has to struggle against. It is conceded by all who are acquainted with the subject that, when once a deaf or blind child really begins to learn, it is highly important to continue without interruption; while, in the case of a child who has the double misfortune, it is of even greater importance. It was, therefore, with deep regret that I gave up my work of teaching Sophia when her mind seemed just ready to burst into bloom.

Sophia was ever interesting to me, awake or asleep; and when any one approached to waken her my heart protested with the author of "*The Blind Sleeper*:"

“Let her sleep on ;
 Her heart is weary of the dark ;
 Let her sleep on.
 Who knows ? In dream-land she may see
 Bright scenes that, in her waking, flee ;
 So let her be.

“Let her sleep on ;
 Her lips, so patient, part in smiles ;
 Let her sleep on.
 Who knows ? She dreams, perchance, of sight ;
 Shall we wake her to life's night ?
 No, let her be.”

Such afflicted beings as Sophia and Laura are generally looked upon as objects of pity, yet each one of them has a mission-work in the world which can be done by no other. To the impatient and trifling, they are teachers of patience, perseverance, and earnestness ; to the ungrateful, they are rebuking angels, saying, continually, Count your blessings !

READING AS A MEANS OF ACQUIRING A GOOD COMMAND OF LANGUAGE.

BY HENRY WHITE, BOSTON, MASS.

[THE writer of this article, who is a member of the Junior Class in the National Deaf-Mute College, lost his hearing, and with it his speech, at the age of four years. The freedom and accuracy with which he now uses the English language are largely due to the habit of reading, acquired and practised in the manner here set forth and commended.—ED. ANNALS.]

Histories, biographies, and essays make up the usual course of reading recommended by teachers, parents, or guardians to young people. But this is not always the best plan for a beginning, when it is desired to create in them a taste for reading. A human being has different tastes, whether physical or mental, at different periods of his life, and, in the natural course of things, his tastes as to reading will change as he grows older.

The child delights in nursery tales, such as Cinderella, Mother Goose, Santa Claus, Jack the Giant-Killer, etc. The boy of ten or twelve can find nothing so pleasant as perusing juvenile works, like those about good or bad little boys. Books like *Oliver Optic's* are almost exclusively read at this tender age. Then the youth of sixteen or more is passionately fond of por-

